

National Skills Coalition: Foundational Skills in the Service Sector

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Across the United States, millions of men and women with limited reading, math, or digital problem-solving skills are holding down jobs across the service sector. Employed in retail shops and restaurants, hotels and hospitals, these workers not only help fuel the country's economy — they keep daily life in America humming smoothly along. In the course of their jobs, these workers often need to read vital directions, follow safety protocols, calculate prices, supervise colleagues, and oversee budgets. All of these tasks are made dramatically more challenging for workers who

don't have strong literacy or numeracy skills. Many resort to creative work-arounds in an attempt to compensate for their lack of skills, but others struggle in silence. Their skill gaps carry heavy consequences for themselves, their co-workers, their employers, and our society as a whole.

A new [report](#) by Amanda Bergson-Shilcock, Director of Upskilling at National Skills Coalition, offers a fresh analysis of rigorous international data, painting a picture of the approximately 20 million American workers employed in key service-sector industries who lack foundational skills.¹ It highlights promising practices and interventions used by U.S. employers to help their workers to upskill. And it details key policy levers that can foster economic mobility for these workers.

Source: [National Skills Coalition](#)